



## THIRD UN WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: 14-18 MARCH 2015

The third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) opens today in Sendai, Japan, following a one-day meeting of the third session of the Preparatory Committee on 13 March. The Conference is expected to adopt the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and a political declaration. The Conference will also include five ministerial roundtables on: governing disaster risk; international cooperation in support of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction; reducing disaster risk in urban settings; reconstructing after disasters; and public investment strategies for disaster risk reduction. Three high-level multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues will convene on “Mobilizing women’s leadership in disaster risk reduction,” “Risk-sensitive investment: public-private partnerships,” and “Inclusive disaster risk management: governments, communities and groups acting together.”

On the eve of the conference, Preparatory Committee discussions co-chaired by Päivi Kairamo (Finland) and Thani Thongphakdi (Thailand) discussed the draft of the post-2015 DRR framework and addressed issues including: targets, indicators, means of implementation, and follow-up actions. The Committee recommended that the Conference establish a Main Committee to take forward discussion of the draft, including bracketed text.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF UN ACTIVITIES ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Natural hazards, such as floods and droughts, and the impacts of extreme events such as earthquakes and tsunamis, are becoming more frequent and intense, with devastating consequences for people and communities. Compounding the situation, poor planning, poverty and a range of other underlying factors create conditions of vulnerability that result in insufficient capacity to cope with natural hazards and disasters. Action to reduce risk has grown in importance on the international agenda and many see this as essential to safeguarding sustainable development efforts and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as well as being a key component of the post-2015 development agenda.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) includes all the policies, strategies and measures that can make people, cities and countries more resilient to hazards and reduce risk and vulnerability to disasters. Recognizing that natural hazards can threaten anyone unexpectedly, the UNISDR system builds on

partnerships and takes a global approach to disaster reduction, seeking to involve every individual and community in moving towards the goals of reducing the loss of lives, socio-economic setbacks and environmental damage caused by natural hazards.

**INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION:** An increase in human casualties and property damage caused by disasters in the 1980s motivated the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1989 to declare the 1990s the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) (Resolution 44/236). The aim of the IDNDR was to address disaster prevention in the context of a range of hazards, including: earthquakes, windstorms, tsunamis, floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, grasshopper and locust infestations, and drought and desertification.

**FIRST WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION:** One of the main outcomes of the IDNDR was the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World and its Plan of Action, adopted in 1994 at the first World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held in Yokohama, Japan. The Yokohama Strategy set guidelines for action on prevention, preparedness and mitigation of disaster risk. These guidelines were based on a set of principles that stress the importance of risk assessment, disaster prevention and preparedness, the capacity to prevent, reduce and mitigate disasters, and early warning. The principles also stated that the international community should share technology to prevent, reduce and mitigate disasters, while demonstrating a strong political determination in the field of disaster reduction.

**INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION:** At its 54th session in 1999, the UNGA decided to continue the activities on disaster prevention and vulnerability reduction carried out during the IDNDR through the establishment of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). An Inter-Agency Secretariat and an Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction (IATF/DR) for the implementation of the ISDR were also established (Resolutions 54/219 and 56/195, respectively). Among its mandated tasks, the IATF/DR was to convene *ad hoc* expert meetings on issues related to disaster reduction.

**SECOND WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION:** The second World Conference on Disaster Reduction convened from 18-22 January 2005 in Kobe, Japan. The aim of the conference was to increase the international profile of DRR, promote its integration into development planning and practice, and strengthen local and national capacities to address the causes of disasters that hamper development. The 168 states attending the conference adopted

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the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (HFA) and the Hyogo Declaration. The HFA was endorsed by the UNGA in Resolution 60/195 and committed governments to five priorities for action to: ensure that DRR is a national and local priority, with a strong institutional basis for implementation; identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning; use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels; reduce the underlying risk factors; and strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

**GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DRR:** In 2006, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs launched a consultative process to consider practical ways of strengthening the ISDR system to support governments in meeting their commitments to implement the HFA. As outlined in the UN Secretary-General's reports on the implementation of the ISDR, the main aims were to extend participation of governments and organizations, raise the profile of disaster reduction, and construct a more coherent international effort to support national disaster reduction activities. A result of the consultations was the proposal to convene the Global Platform for DRR as an expanded and reformed successor to the IATF/DR. The Global Platform was envisaged to serve as the primary multi-stakeholder forum for all parties involved in DRR in order to raise awareness on DRR, share experience and guide the ISDR system.

**FIRST SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DRR:** The first session of the Global Platform was held from 5-7 June 2007 in Geneva, Switzerland. It included a high-level dialogue on DRR challenges and opportunities, a series of workshops on DRR as a national priority and integrating DRR into sector agendas, and plenary sessions on assessing and implementing the HFA. Discussions resulted in a Chair's Summary that was included in the UN Secretary-General's report to the UNGA on the implementation of the ISDR.

**SECOND SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DRR:** The second session of the Global Platform was held from 16-19 June 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland. Participants assessed progress made on DRR since the Global Platform's first session, and discussed increasing investment in DRR, reducing disaster risk in a changing climate, and enabling community resilience through preventive action. The Chair's Summary of the meeting helped set the agenda for the global DRR community's preparations for the UN climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009, as well as for the Mid-term Review of the HFA.

**INFORMAL THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNGA ON DRR:** This debate took place at UN headquarters in New York, US, on 9 February 2011. Organized under the auspices of the office of the UNGA President, with support from UNISDR, the debate consisted of two panel discussions: the first panel focused on promoting investment in DRR, while the second addressed the challenges of DRR in urban settings and how to build resilience in cities. The outcomes of the debate contributed to the agenda of the third session of the Global Platform for DRR.

**MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE HFA 2005-2015:** The Mid-term Review, released in March 2011, highlights progress in DRR, critically analyzing the extent to which implementation of the HFA has progressed, as well as identifying ways to assist countries and their institutional partners to increase commitment, resourcing and efforts in its further implementation. According to the Review, progress in DRR is occurring, especially institutionally in the passing of national legislation,

establishment of early warning systems, and strengthening of disaster preparedness and response. The review raised concerns about: the lack of systematic multi-hazard risk assessments and early warning systems, factoring in social and economic vulnerabilities; the poor integration of DRR into sustainable development policies and planning at national and international levels; and the insufficient level of implementation of the HFA at the local level.

**THIRD SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DRR:** The third session of the Global Platform was held from 8-13 May 2011 in Geneva, Switzerland, under the theme "Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow – Increased Investment in Local Action." The meeting built on the findings and recommendations of the Global Platform's second session held in 2009, as well as the results of the Mid-term Review of the HFA and the 2011 Global Assessment Report on DRR. Discussions focused mainly on reconstruction and recovery, the economics of DRR, and synergies with the international climate change and development agendas.

**FOURTH SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DRR:** The fourth session of the Global Platform convened from 19-23 May 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting provided an opportunity to review the status of the HFA and encourage information sharing among decision makers, development partners, experts and practitioners. It also provided tools and methodologies, especially relating to economic analyses of, and investment in DRR. The outcomes of the meeting included a Chair's Summary and the Communiqué of the High-Level Dialogue.

**REGIONAL PLATFORMS:** Regional intergovernmental organizations have increasingly taken responsibility for follow-up of risk reduction activities and HFA implementation, organizing a series of multi-stakeholder platforms for DRR in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Arab States, Europe and the Americas. The regional platforms provide a forum for institutionalizing the exchange of information and knowledge among national stakeholders, and enable diverse regional stakeholders to share experience, monitor progress, seek investment opportunities, and take collective strategic decisions and action to enhance the implementation of their DRR activities. They are also used as benchmarks in the regions to monitor the implementation of the HFA. The outcomes from regional platforms feed into the biennial Global Platforms with the aim of supporting effective global action and expanding the political space devoted to DRR.

**PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR WCDRR:** The 68th session of UNGA, in 2013, established an Open-ended Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee to review organizational and substantive preparations for the third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (resolution 68/211). The Preparatory Committee is steered by a 10-member Bureau co-chaired by Finland and Thailand. The Bureau has two representatives from each region and conference host Japan is an *ex officio* member.

The Preparatory Committee met twice, from 14-15 July 2014 and from 17-18 November 2014, to agree on the agenda and proposed rules of procedure, as well as developing the Conference programme of work and a draft post-2015 framework on DRR. A zero draft of the proposed post-2015 DRR framework was released for public comment on 21 October 2014, following the second meeting of the Committee.

The Preparatory Committee met for a third time on 13 March 2015 to consider a revised draft post-2015 DRR framework for transmission to the WCDRR.